

Page B8 Pharos-Tribune, Logansport, Indiana, Monday, February 8, 1999

Tip of the Week

Talk to me

You might think that your arm would get awfully tired if you used your computer to make a phone call, holding it up to your ear. Luckily, you don't have to. If you have speakers, a modem, a microphone and a phone line connected to your computer, here's how Windows95 can save you the steps to your telephone:

1. Click on Start, Drive to Programs + Accessories + Phone Dialer.
2. Enter the number you want to dial, either in the box or on the keypad. This works just like a regular phone. If you need to dial a prefix for an outside line, be sure to dial it.
3. Click Dial.

If the call goes through, you'll hear the person you've called through the speakers; they hear you through the microphone on your computer. When your phone call is over, click Hang Up.

Need an answer to a technology question? Have a comment about 'nology? Contact us at: nology@solutions.730 N. Franklin, Suite 706, Chicago, IL 60610 or e-mail us @ nology@ttmedia.com

Review

Scrabble: A Hasbro emul game
Hasbro Interactive / www.emul-games.com / Win \$8.95 / \$15 (\$22 CAD)

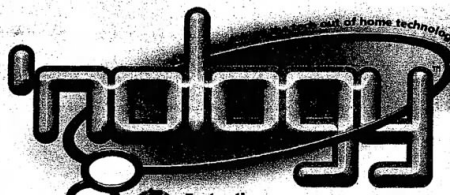
Last week in this space, we introduced you to the concept of Hasbro's new emul games. This week, we look at Scrabble under a microscope. It plays just like the Scrabble you've been playing for years. You're allotted seven tiles at a time and you do your best to create the highest-scoring combination of letters and place them on the "board" in the way that earns the most points. (The triple-word-score tiles and such are color-coded; the overall screen size makes the tiles too small to accommodate the words.)

The computer keeps track of your current total score as well as the score for the current word placements for both you and your opponent. Can't think of a good word? Pass your turn. Stuck with nothing but vowels? Exchange a tile. Think your friend's word is nonsense? Challenge him. There's also a text feature so you can "chat" with each other as you send the game back and forth. But I wonder: Are these games a means to socialize, or merely another way to cut down on human contact in an ever-decreasing computer age? Unless you're truly distant from your friends, geographically, why not have them over and play the original Scrabble face to face?

—Beth Kujawa

Is that a rug?

Mouse pad. They can be so predictable: fabric-covered foam, plastic, leather. Dull, dull, dull. Why not bring a little class to your desktop with a Mousegug. We'll let its Web site do the talking: "For the first time, the classic beauty of traditional handmade rug patterns has been combined with the new, high-tech Lextra fiber coating process to create the Lextra Mousegug." Available in six styles, you can trap a Mousegug at select retail locations or at www.mousegug.com.



Faster than a...

AST Computer recently unveiled its new line of PCs powered by Intel's Pentium III processor. The Bravo desktop computer will come fitted with a 450 megahertz chip and retail for \$1,699 (\$2,593). The faster 500 megahertz machine will start at \$2,099 (\$3,203). The Pentium III chip has been the subject of controversy because it includes a serial number that could act as an identification number for the computer on the Internet. Intel has said it will supply software enabling users to switch the feature off.

I've got good news...

The good news is, all this Y2K mania may be a boon for the economy this year, as companies and individuals stockpile goods in the event of problems in the early part of next year. The bad news is, all of that growth toward the end of the year will likely cause the economy to become slightly sluggish when the clock ticks 2000.

Less taxing

File electronically and shred the need for forms

By John W. Ellis IV

KEEPING accurate computerized financial records throughout the year can pay off big, particularly during tax time.

If you are looking to cut down on the amount of time you spend keeping track of financial records, consider one of several programs or Web sites that will help you keep your finances straight and compute your taxes. Tax time is just around the corner, so it's time to boot up your computer. The first in a two-part series, this story will give you a list of Web sites that will help you with your taxes, from simple advice to completing and filing your 1040. Next week, the second part of the series will discuss the benefits of using software to track your finances all year to make it easier during tax time.

"Filing taxes electronically has grown in leaps and bounds the last few years," says Bob Enderle, an analyst with Giga Information Group in Santa Clara, Calif. Filing electronically lets taxpayers take advantage of vast amounts of advice and speeds up returns when filed online.

The first and last Web site many people surf is the Digital Daily (www.irs.ustrust.gov), an online publication of the Internal Revenue Service.

Not surprisingly, the IRS was one of the first federal branches to win wide praise from "net experts" for making the information on the site easier to digest and graphically pleasing.

The most recent information about 1998 tax guidelines is available on this site, as well as money-saving tips from the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997. Looking to find out whether you're eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit? Or maybe you want to know how many millionaires pay taxes in the United States? It's all there.

If you are a novice at doing your own taxes, the IRS site also has a posted copy of Publication 17, a guide that gives you completed sample tax forms that you can follow to help you in filing your own return.

In addition to tax information, the site has a small-business information section that gives tips and advice on starting a small business. A tax calendar will help you keep track of important tax dates in 1999.

To top it all off, why not actually do your taxes and file them electronically? The site provides a list of authorized IRS e-file providers, professionals who can file your return with the push of a button.

According to the site, 24.6 million people filed taxes electronically last year. The IRS also promotes the fact that filing "Send" to file your taxes will get you a refund back to you a lot faster.

Of course, if you prefer doing your taxes with a stack of pencils and 10-pound calculator, the site will walk you through that process and give you the addresses you need to send in your taxes.

At least take advantage of the online forms section that allows you to print any tax document you need for filing.

At Cyberinvest (www.cyberinvest.com/guides/tax_guide.html) you will find a comprehensive listing of sites that deal with tax information. Cyberinvest categorizes other sites by what type of information is available, special features and whether you can file electronically or not.

OneTax.com (www.onetax.com) will allow you to file your taxes online for only \$9.95 without any special software, and lets you calculate "what-if" scenarios anonymously and without charge.

Intuit's Web TurboTax (www.quicken.com) is an online version of the leading software package TurboTax. The site will ask you, in plain English, several questions to take you through your taxes then file them online. A big feature of the site is the "Quicken Tax Freedom Project," which allows anyone who makes \$20,000 or less to file for free. Otherwise, filing starts at \$9.95.

Microsoft's MoneyCentral (www.moneycentral.msn.com/tax/home.asp) in addition to electronic filing, has several articles that can help maximize your returns. In particular, find out about the top 10 overlooked deductions and the seven mistakes most taxpayers make.

At AOL.com (AOL members can sign on to the "Personal Finance" section), you can find a number

of tax-related information services. Review and buy the latest software, download forms or link with government and commercial Web sites.

HARR Block (www.harrblock.com) also weighs heavy on the "net. One of the nation's oldest tax-preparation companies will give you all the standard services — from advice to electronic filing — in addition to answering your questions via e-mail for free (many services charge for answering specific questions). And if you find yourself wrapped up tightly in taxing red tape, sign on to HARR's Tax Rescue Page to cut through the confusion.

The Armchair Millionaire (www.armchairmillionaire.com) provides several experts and articles that provide information on several financial topics, including taxes.

If you are willing to take advantage of the wealth of information available on the Web but still shy about actually filing online, take heed. Most financial services are moving to online communications, experts say, including the government.

Filing your taxes online is such a streamlined process, Enderle says, "that we believe in the future, filing manually with paper will cost extra."

Web Watch



Hamsters seem like they'd be good pets. They don't take up a lot of space. You don't have to walk them on cold, snowy nights. And they look cute holding food in their little hands and nibbling on it with their little teeth.

A look at the world...

<http://home.clara.net/ariev/george.htm>
... from a hamster's point of view. Read the stories of George the hamster. George really is no longer with us, but his hamster legacy lives on.

When hamsters turn bad

<http://www.webspun.net/~meglevic/ie/cheeble.html>
It's like "War of the Worlds." It's "War of the Worlds." "Cheeble: Killer Hamsters from Space" is actually the product of a science-fiction club from Bronx High School.

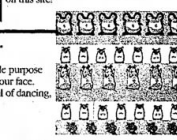


Last but not least...

<http://hamsterdance.com>
This site seems to exist for little purpose other than to put a smile on your face. Who wouldn't love a screenshot of dancing, singing, animated hamsters?

Endorsed by Babwa Wawa?

<http://www.teleport.com/~trnsnly/wadent.html>
If Gilda Radner were still alive, I'm sure she'd wore to talk about Wodent Wheels while pretending to be Babwa Wawa. Meanwhile, we'd like to know who decided a rose would be an appropriate prop on this site?



All art and photos excerpted from reviewed sites.

1300 E. Broadway
Logansport, Indiana 46947
Phone: (219)732-0019
<http://www.cqc.com>

If you want the fastest and most reliable internet access in Cass County, join ComQuest Internet Services now!